

1 September, 2024

15 Sunday after Pentecost

God's Judgment is Just and Merciful

Isaiah 51:3-8

Psalms 9:7-12

Romans 2:1-11

John 8:2-11

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Today, on this 15th Sunday after Pentecost, we gather to reflect on a profound and sometimes unsettling topic: God's judgment. The concept of judgment often brings with it feelings of fear and anxiety, but as we explore today, God's judgment is not only just but also merciful. In a world filled with injustice, the assurance of God's righteous judgment offers hope. We'll explore this theme through the lens of Scripture, looking at Isaiah 51:3-8, Psalm 9:7-12, Romans 2:1-11, and John 8:2-11, and consider how God's judgment is a demonstration of both His justice and His mercy.

1. The Justice of God's Judgment (Psalm 9:7-12)

The psalmist declares in Psalm 9:7-8, "But the Lord sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for judgment. He judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with equity." These verses emphasize that God's judgment is not arbitrary or unjust but is rooted in righteousness and equity. God, as the ultimate Judge, sees all and knows all. He is not swayed by appearances or influenced by partiality, as human judges might be. The justice of God's judgment is a central theme throughout the Bible. It assures us that evil will not go unpunished and that righteousness will be rewarded. This is comforting in a world where injustice often seems to prevail. We see corruption, exploitation, and the oppression of the innocent, and it can lead us to question whether there is any justice at all. Yet, Scripture reminds us that God's judgment is just and fair. He will right all wrongs, and His judgment will be the final word.

2. The Promise of Restoration (Isaiah 51:3-8)

Isaiah 51:3 offers a beautiful promise: "For the Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song." Here, we see that God's judgment is not only about punishment but also about restoration. His justice is intertwined with His mercy. In this passage, God promises to restore Zion, to turn her desolate places into a paradise like Eden. This is a powerful image of God's merciful judgment. Even as He judges, He also redeems and restores. God's judgment is not vindictive; it is restorative. It seeks to bring about healing and renewal. The theology

of God's justice and mercy is encapsulated in this vision of restoration. Even when God disciplines His people, it is with the ultimate goal of bringing them back to Himself, of restoring them to a state of blessing and peace.

3. The Impartiality of God's Judgment (Romans 2:1-11)

In Romans 2:6-11, the Apostle Paul writes, "He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury." This passage highlights the impartiality of God's judgment. God shows no favoritism. Whether Jew or Gentile, all are judged according to their deeds. Paul's message is clear: no one can escape God's judgment. It doesn't matter what background you come from, what privileges you have, or what religious rituals you've performed. What matters is how you have lived your life. Have you sought to do good, to live according to God's truth? Or have you been self-seeking, disregarding God's commandments? This impartiality of God's judgment reinforces the idea of His perfect justice. Unlike human judges, who can be influenced by biases or external factors, God's judgment is purely based on truth and righteousness. This should lead us to self-examination. Are we living in a way that aligns with God's will? Are we seeking His glory, or are we driven by our own selfish desires?

4. The Mercy in God's Judgment (John 8:2-11)

The story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8:2-11 is a powerful example of the mercy in God's judgment. The religious leaders brought this woman to Jesus, ready to stone her according to the Law of Moses. But Jesus responded with profound wisdom and mercy. He said, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). One by one, the accusers left, and Jesus was left alone with the woman. He then said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more" (John 8:11). This passage shows that God's judgment is not only just but also merciful. Jesus did not condone the woman's sin, but He also did not condemn her. He gave her a chance to repent and change her ways. This is the essence of God's mercy. While He is righteous and just, He is also compassionate and willing to forgive those who turn to Him. This story also serves as a reminder that we should not be quick to judge others. We are all sinners in need of God's mercy. As recipients of His mercy, we are called to extend that same mercy to others. God's judgment is not about retribution but about bringing people to repentance and restoration.

Conclusion

As we conclude, let us remember that God's judgment is both just and merciful. He is a righteous Judge who sees all and knows all. His judgment is impartial, and no one can escape it. But at the same time, His judgment is filled with mercy, offering us the opportunity to repent and be restored.

The reality of God's judgment should lead us to live lives of righteousness, seeking to do good and follow His will. It should also fill us with hope, knowing that God's justice will ultimately prevail and that His mercy is always available to those who seek it. Let us embrace both the justice and mercy of God, trusting in His righteous judgment and His compassionate love. May we live in a way that reflects His character, and may we extend the mercy we have received to others.

Prayer

Gracious and merciful God, we thank You for Your just and righteous judgment. We are grateful for the mercy You extend to us despite our shortcomings. Help us to live lives that honour You, seeking to do good and follow Your will. May we always be mindful of Your justice and extend Your mercy to others. We ask for Your guidance and strength as we strive to live according to Your truth. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.